



## **MEDIA STATEMENT**

March 2, 2010

Provided is a media statement from Steve Roberts, President of the West Virginia Chamber of Commerce:

### **Economic Downturn In State Has Cost Nearly One Of 10 Jobs *Time For Key Groups To Unite Behind Economic Growth***

The national recession and new challenges facing key business sectors in West Virginia have resulted in the loss of nearly one of every ten jobs in our state. According to recent information from Workforce West Virginia, West Virginia's total employment has dropped from 766,500 in January 2008 to 698,700 today. That is a reduction of nearly 10 percent. The state's unemployment rate now stands at 10.5 percent in January 2010, and the balance of the state's jobless benefit fund is dropping and nearing a critical situation.

This is a very troubling trend. West Virginians are being hurt by the ongoing recession, by EPA's "war on coal/energy," and by the continued erosion of our state's manufacturing sector. As a state, we must turn our attention even more to how to help key business sectors, how to preserve jobs and how to create more jobs.

This will require more collaborative interaction among our state's business community, our elected public officials and support from groups such as labor unions and education groups. I call on leaders of the AFL-CIO, the West Virginia Education Association and other education groups to support pro-growth policies that will help to stimulate business activity and grow more private-sector jobs for all our citizens.

Steps where the state can make significant pro-growth improvements, even in a tight budget environment, are by enacting legislative changes where the state clearly is out of step, which is hurting the state's overall business climate. These include:

- enacting comprehensive legal reforms so our state can come into line with nearly every other state,
- supporting common-sense health care reform proposals such as more flexibility for health insurance purchasing options, greater focus on preventative and chronic care management, implementation of health information technologies, etc.;
- preserving the state's Rainy Day Fund so scheduled business tax reductions can take place;
- bringing a halt to EPA, Obama Administration and congressional non-sense related to lawful environmental permits for domestic energy (natural gas and coal) production;
- generating widespread support to maintain our state's energy production and distribution capabilities; and
- encouraging more options and better outcomes from our state's K-12 education system so our students are fully prepared for the demands of today's economy and can compete for skilled jobs.

Many of these ideas are included in the West Virginia Chamber's 2010 policy papers – [click to read](#).

These are some of the areas where united efforts could result in improved economic opportunities and provide more employment benefits across the board. I am hopeful that diverse groups will start to work together for the betterment of our state.

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